Unit .08

Session .02

The Promise of Victory

Scripture

Joshua 2:8-13; 6:15-17, 20-25

8 Before the men fell asleep, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given you this land and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is panicking because of you. **10** For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings you completely destroyed across the Jordan. **11** When we heard this, we lost heart, and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below. **12** Now please swear to me by the LORD that you will also show kindness to my father's family, because I showed kindness to you. Give me a sure sign **13** that you will spare the lives of my father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all who belong to them, and save us from death." … **15** Early on the seventh day, they started at dawn and marched around the city seven times in the same way. That was the only day they marched around the city seven times. **16** After the seventh time, the priests blew the trumpets, and Joshua said to the troops, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. **17** But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the messengers we sent. … **20** So the troops shouted, and the trumpets sounded. When they heard the blast of the trumpet, the troops gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. The troops advanced into the city, each man straight ahead, and they captured the city. **21** They completely destroyed everything in the city with the sword—every man and woman, both young and old, and every ox, sheep, and donkey. **22** Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, "Go to the prostitute's house and bring the woman out of there, and all who are with her, just as you swore to her." **23** So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel. **24** They burned the city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. **25** However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's family, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the messengers Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she still lives in Israel today.

Intro Options

Main Point:
God responds to whoever calls on His mercy.

Option 1

Begin a discussion about students' relationships with their parents. You might consider sharing a personal experience or memory from your own childhood about a time you chose to obey your parents and are glad you did, even though you didn't understand at the time the reason behind what they were asking. Don't get too involved or deep with this discussion, but ask questions such as: Would you consider yourself an obedient child? Why or why not? Would your parents consider you to be an obedient child? Why or why not? Think about the last instruction you received from your parents. Did you question it? Explain. When you question your parents' instructions, how do they typically respond?

- **Discuss students' relationships with God, then ask:**
- **Would you say you are an obedient child of God? Why or why not?**
- **Is it more difficult to obey God than it is your parents? Explain.**
- **What's your motivation for obeying God?**

Option 2

Wimbledon 2001 was the scene of one of the greatest dramatic events ever in tennis—at least for Goran Ivanisevic. The former 1992 Australian Open champion had fallen so far from his glory days that he needed the gift of a wild card to enter the Wimbledon tournament. He and the other players probably thought his presence would not be much more than an uninteresting rerun. He had made it to three previous Wimbledon finals and was the lucky loser all three times. This year was different, even though the final included a formidable opponent. Against all odds, the 125th seeded wild card triumphantly held up the Wimbledon trophy. To say the least, it was an unusual victory.

Joshua 6 contains one of the most dramatic scenes in all of Scripture. There is the protagonist—Israel; the antagonist—the city of Jericho; the rising action—the marching around the walls of Jericho once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day; and there is the climax—the walls of Jericho come tumbling down! Like Ivanisevic's win many years later, Israel's dramatic victory was against all odds.

- **When have you been surprised by the way God worked something out in your life? How does remembering how God has worked in the past help you to trust Him with the future?**

TEACHING PLAN

Read Joshua 2:8-13

As the Israelites began their conquest of the promised land, first up was the fortified city of Jericho. In this session, we will see that word of God's works and power had gone before the Israelites and the people of Jericho were terrified. And yet, that did not prevent them from retreating behind their city walls, hoping they could hold out against the advancing Israelites. Everyone, that is, except for a woman named Rahab, known for her profession as a prostitute. Risking danger to herself, Rahab gave safe harbor to Israelite spies who had infiltrated the walls to scout out the city. Not only did she allow them to stay, but she also hid them from the authorities who had heard about their infiltration. Before the spies left her home, she revealed how the citizens of Jericho really felt about the Israelites, and she made an important request.

Rahab had heard of God's mighty acts (v. 10) and understood what was coming: God would be victorious. She found herself on the losing side with no weapon that could withstand such power. But accepting stories as truth was only the first step; Rahab followed her understanding with a statement of faith where she confessed the Lord as the God of heaven and earth (v. 11). Now the Israelites had, for hundreds of years, heard from God, received His Word, and witnessed His power. Rahab, on the other hand, had not experienced any of that. She had only heard about it second-hand. And yet, she believed that, though she knew little about this God, He was the ultimate authority of heaven and earth. Rahab was calling on Yahweh Elohim, the Creator God, through His representatives, the spies, to show mercy to her and her family. Rahab placed the kind of faith in God that the children of Israel had struggled to walk in for generations.

- **What do you "know" about the Lord? In what ways might you feel like you understand God without "knowing" Him?**

Rahab's belief and faith in God was not all that set her apart. She took the next step and acted on what she knew—she placed her life in the hands of this all-powerful God.

- **Describe the moment you went from merely knowing about God to placing your life in His hands?**

99 Essential Doctrines *(p. 48, DDG)*

People of God

Scripture describes the church as "the people of God" (2 Cor. 6:16). Comprised of both Jew and Gentile, the church is created by God through the atoning death of Christ. The term "church" is used in two senses—of individual local churches composed of people who have covenanted together under the lordship of Christ and of the universal church composed of all believers in Christ in all times. As the people of God, the church seeks to live under God's ruling care while we are protected and cared for by Him.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God responds to whoever calls on His mercy.

Joshua 2

8-13. When Rahab said she knew the Lord, she used a very strong verb: *yada*. Its base meaning is "to know," but it carries with it the idea of knowing intimately through observation or experience. Its first use in the Bible is when the serpent said to Eve, "God *knows* that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, *knowing* good and evil," (Gen. 3:5, italics added to denote the use of *yada*). It was also used when God told Moses, "I *know* you by name, and you have also found favor with me" (Ex. 33:12).

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as "the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen." Faith and hope are intertwined, and we see both in Rahab's conversation with the spies: her hope and faith were not in herself, her city, or her people. It was in God alone, because He is all-powerful. She could hope when all the others of her city were without hope because she knew to put her faith in the only One who could save.

Rahab may not have known the law that God gave to the people at this point, but she knew that God was a God of mercy. A God who had rescued His people time and time again. And this is what she clung to in her newfound faith. This was the basis of her request for the Israelites to show kindness to her and her family and to spare them from the coming destruction. Not because of who *they* were—but because of who *their* God was.

In Defense *(p. 50, DDG)*

When it comes to the driving out of these people groups from the promised land, it is important to remember that God was willing to wait about 430 years because "the iniquity of the Amorites [a Canaanite people group] has not yet reached its full measure" (Gen. 15:16). In other words, Israel's conquering of this land was a form of judgment by God in light of the people's sins. And to demonstrate the long-suffering patience of God, He waited more than four hundred years before finally judging them for their unrepentant sins.

What kind of wickedness did the Canaanites keep pursuing? All kinds of sexual sin, even as far as incest and bestiality, in addition to child sacrifice (Lev. 18:20-30), among others. According to one biblical scholar, "The evidence for profound moral corruption was abundant. God considered them ripe for divine judgment, which would be carried out in keeping with God's saving purposes in history."[1]

Not only that, but in regard to the seemingly harsh language of destroying everyone, "the average person isn't going to pick up on the fact that this stereotypical ancient Near Eastern language actually describes attacks on military forts or garrisons, not general populations that included women and children. There is no archaeological evidence of civilian populations at Jericho or Ai. ... The use of 'women' and 'young and old' was merely stock ancient Near Eastern language that could be used even if women and young and old weren't living there. The language of 'all' ('men and women') at Jericho and Ai is a 'stereotypical expression for the destruction of all human life in the fort, presumably composed entirely of combatants.'"[2]

TEACHING PLAN

As Israel's emissaries, the spies vowed to protect Rahab and her family and made a plan to identify them by a scarlet cord hanging from her window. The spies left Jericho unharmed, thanks to Rahab's protection, and returned to Joshua and the other Israelites, who had been waiting to hear their report.

With Jericho in sight, God gave Joshua the battle plan, and it was a curious one: they were to march. For six days, the soldiers—men of war—were to circle the city once. That was it. No fighting, no siege, no military tactics.

- **What questions do you think you might have had after hearing Joshua's instructions?**
- **Have you ever questioned something you sensed God leading you to do? If so, how did you respond?**

Read Joshua 6:15-17; 20-21

Picture the scene through Rahab's eyes: she had risked everything, believing that the men representing a God she did not know would keep their word. Would the God of the Israelites really come through? She had trusted that God would be victorious, and so she placed herself at His mercy, demonstrated to her through His people.

- **When have you trusted in God and later saw Him come through in a powerful way? How did you feel?**

Activity

Have students write out their own experiencing of placing their faith in Christ for salvation. As they write, tell them to keep in mind the parallels here of Rahab, being on the enemy's side, was brought to God's side through faih. Writing out their story will either help believers in your group to see the connection, as well as help those who may not be believers call out to God for grace and mercy.

Read Joshua 6:22-25

Rahab's story is pretty remarkable. Her victory was not just avoiding death—not just surviving—she was now brought into the victorious people of God. A former enemy was now more than a friend. God had shown her kindness (2:12). In His mercy, Rahab and her family were allowed to live. In His grace, Rahab and her family were brought into the people of God.

And this is what God does with us through Christ. He likewise showers us with mercy and grace. We are spared from the punishment of our sin in God's mercy, and in His grace, we are brought into His family—we become His children, part of His church. We, who were once enemies, are now His righteous children (Rom. 5:10). Only by God's kindness, mercy, and grace.

- **What are some ways that God has showed you unexpected kindness, mercy, and grace that exceeded your expectations?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God responds to whoever calls on His mercy.

Joshua 6

15-17. It is interesting to note the content of Joshua's last speech before the battle at Jericho began. Sure, he mentions God and the fact that God is actually the one fighting on their behalf—all of which is true—but he also has the forethought to include Rahab in his speech. Can you remember a single battlefield speech where the commander reminds every fighter to take care of one woman, let alone a woman on the enemy's side? Joshua had never even met Rahab; the two spies had sealed the deal. It would have been easy for Joshua to ignore their request. After all, he had so much more on his mind, right? And how was it reasonable to ask his forces, in their first battle, to worry about one woman and her family?

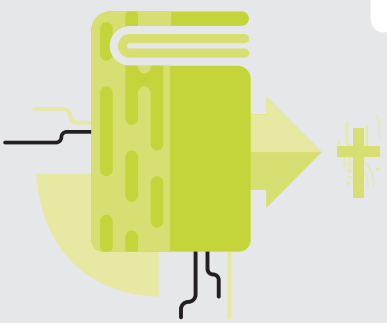
But Joshua understood that this woman—a foreigner, an enemy, a woman of ill-repute—had professed faith in God and had risked her life to prove that she believed in Israel's God. And so, he called out to his warriors to spare Rahab and her family. Then the trumpets blew, the men shouted, and the walls fell. The troops advanced into the city and destroyed everything and everyone—except Rahab and her family.

Joshua delivered God's marching orders, and the people prepared for victory by obeying. Regardless of any inward doubt, the Israelites obeyed God. They marched in silence around Jericho's massive wall once a day for six days. Were their feet tired? Were they exhausted? Were they yearning to whisper a small complaint to a neighbor or friend? Maybe the mighty men of war felt embarrassed as they marched in silence. Or did they feel a sense of renewed strength because they were doing the will of God in God's way?

At the end of the seventh trip around the wall, on the seventh day, Joshua gave the command. The people shouted before the wall fell—not after. They shouted in faith, believing God had given them the city. God moved at the sound of the shout and brought the wall down in such a convincing way that the text says the wall fell down flat! The word means just that—flat. Not one stone was on top of another.

(p. 49, DDG) Christ Connection

Rahab recognized God's future victory and appealed to the spies for mercy so she would be spared from the coming destruction. When Jericho fell, Rahab received mercy and was brought in to become part of the people of God. Whoever trusts in Jesus and appeals to Him for mercy is spared from the judgment of sin and is brought in to become part the church.



THE PROMISE OF VICTORY

Joshua 2:8–13; 6:15–17, 20–25

THE PROMISE OF VICTORY

God responds to whoever calls on His mercy.

JESUS CONNECTION

Rahab recognized God's future victory and asked the spies to spare her from the coming destruction. When Jericho fell, Rahab received mercy and was included as one of God's chosen people. Whoever trusts in Jesus and asks Him for mercy is spared from the judgment of sin and welcomed into God's family.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

BOLDNESS – Choosing to do the right thing, even if you are afraid.

HEAD

Name 2 specific ways Rahab showed boldness in today's lesson.

What were some possible risks the Israelite troops could have feared as they marched and shouted around Jericho's walls?

HEART

What gave Rahab the courage to be fearless and act despite the possible risks?

Like Rahab and the people of Israel discovered, bold things are usually also scary things. Why do you think fear and boldness often go together? Do you think we can totally eliminate fear in these situations?

HANDS

God will call us to live boldly. He might prompt us to talk about Him with someone or do the right thing when others are doing wrong. What have you been avoiding because you are afraid or because of the possible risks associated with it? Write down the fears and/or risks. Talk to God about each one and ask Him to give you boldness to do what He is prompting you to do.